KON
KON
KON
WHO'S ON THE OTHER SIDE...?
SOMEONE IS KNOCKING HARD ON THE DOOR.
CHA (CHK)
KO (CLACK)
DOES SHE KNOW WHO'S ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR...?
WHAT'S WITH HER?
YASUMI WATAHASHI SEEMS STRANGELY SATISFIED.
KO

WHO ARE YOU!?
α—13

β—13
NO, WHO ARE YOU...?

STRANGE.
THIS PLACE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE SUFFUSED WITH THE SAME FAINT LIGHT THAT PERMEATED ALL CLOSED SPACE.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE ...?
SO WHY WAS THE SUN PUTTING ON SUCH A GRAND DISPLAY OF A SUNSET?
WHERE IS KUYOH SUOH?
WHERE'S KUYOH, HE WANTS TO KNOW?
WAS THIS FUJIWARA AND TACHI-BANA'S PLAN?
AND WHO ARE THESE TWO ...?

WHO ARE YOU?
IT'S ME! IT'S UNMISTAKABLY ANOTHER ME!

I CAN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF OF "ME."
WHO IS THIS?
IT'S ME, MYSELF.
NOT FROM THE PAST, OR THE FUTURE.
JUST MY OWN SELF, FROM EXACTLY THIS MOMENT.
THE OTHER ME LOOKS JUST AS CONFUSED AS I AM.
HE'S PROBABLY WONDERING...
(GULP)
...WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?

SENPAI!
WHO... ARE YOU?
HEE HEE.
I AM WATA-HASHI.
FUWA (LIFT)

I DON'T KNOW EITHER. BUT WE'LL FIND OUT SOON.
THIS IS EARTH! NOT SOME PLAYGROUND FOR ALIENS!
HOW ABSURD... HA-HA...
YUKI, IT'S ME. EVERYBODY'S HERE TO CHECK IN ON YOU.
DEFINE "DATA OVERMIND" ANSWER.
I NOW PROCLAIM THE SECOND PHASE OF THE SOS BRIGADE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION OPEN!
THE PROBLEM THAT WE'RE FACING MAY BE TO SIMPLY PROVE OUR REASON FOR EXISTENCE.
IT'S CALLED ROOIBOS TEA!
NO STUDENT WITH THAT NAME EXISTS IN THIS SCHOOL.
I AM WATAHASHI.
MY DIRECTIVES PREVENT ANY DEVIATION.
DIDN'T YOU KNOW? KOIZUMI-SAN CREATED THE AGENCY FROM THE GROUND UP.
I'LL DO ANYTHING YOU TELL ME TO DO!
LISTEN, KYON. THIS STORY BELONGS TO YOU AND ME.
IT WOULD BE FUNDAMENTALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR ANY HUMAN.
GOING TO SLEEP FOR A BIT.
THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON BOTH SUZUMIYA-SAN AND I CHOSE. AND THAT'S YOU.
I FOUND THE MIKURU FOLDER!

AH...
WHAT IS THIS ...?
UGH...
NGH ...
PO (PLIP)
PO
PO
TWO VERSIONS OF MY MEMORIES OF THE PAST WEEK NOW EXISTED WITHIN ME.
IT WASN'T A QUESTION OF WHICH WAS TRUE AND WHICH WAS FALSE.
BOTH WERE TRUE, REAL MEMORIES.

WHAT WAS THIS?
THE ONLY THING I COULD CONCLUDE WAS THAT I MYSELF HAD SPLIT AND EXPERIENCED THE SAME TIMELINE TWICE.
AND NOW BOTH OF THEM WERE PERFECTLY ALIGNED IN MY HEAD.
I UNDERSTOOD SO WELL THAT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND AT ALL.
SHOULDN'T I HAVE BEEN MORE CONFUSED?
?
—NOT NECESSARILY.
—THEY'RE BOTH YOU, KYON. YOU JUST HAVE TWO SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT HISTORIES.
YASUMI WATAHASHI!
WHAT ARE YOU!?
—OF THE SAME TIME, IN THE SAME WORLD—

IN THE CASE OF "ME," I UNDERSTOOD IMMEDIATELY.
WHERE DID THEY GO?
THEY'RE GONE.
THE OTHER ME AND YASUMI WATAHASHI HAVE BOTH VANISHED.
BA (WHIP)
FUSION.
BOTH ME AND THE OTHER "ME" HAD BEEN FUSED INTO ONE.
WAS THAT- YASUMI?
WE'D ORIGINALLY BEEN ONE INDIVIDUAL, BUT SOMETHING HAD CAUSED US TO SPLIT.

DEFYING THE CHAIN OF FIXED EVENTS ...?
IT CAN'T BE...WAS THERE SOMEONE WHO RELEASED THE PROHIBITION AHEAD OF ME...?
WHO COULD POSSIBLY ...?
A NON-STANDARD ABNORMALITY THAT'S NOT ON THE SCHEDULE?
THAT'S THE FIRST I'VE HEARD OF IT!
WHO CALLED HER HERE?
GA (KRAK)
GA
WHAT'S THAT!?
THUN-DER?
TA (DASH)
TA
TA

WHAT'S HAPPENING...?
THE SKY WAS SWIRLING.
THE FAINTLY GLOWING CREAM-COLORED CANOPY WAS INTERRUPTED BY AN ANGRY BLUE-GRAY SWIRL...
...COLORS INTERTWINING LIKE COLLIDING GALAXIES IN A BIZARRE DISPLAY.

HERE AND THERE, PALE LIGHT AND DARK GRAY TENDRILS WRIGGLED, AS THOUGH FIGHTING FOR CONTROL.
AND IT WASN'T JUST THE SKY.
OOO (WHOOO)
I COULD TELL THAT THIS WAS STILL THE PALELY-COLORED WORLD.
BUT, WHAT WAS THAT OTHER COLOR?
I WAS STILL INSIDE THE CLOSED SPACE THAT SASAKI CREATED.
THE GRASS IN THE COURTYARD, THE LEAFED-OUT CHERRY TREES...
EVERYTHING WAS BEING DROWNED OUT IN THE TWO COLORS.
OUUU (OOOOM)
IT WAS HARUHI'S CLOSED SPACE.
HARUHI AND SASAKI WERE STRUGGLING WITH EACH OTHER, RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

PAST AND FUTURE, AND EVEN THE PRESENT, DO NOT EXIST HERE.
MATTER
PAR-TICLES.
THIS IS THE BEGINNING.
THE DIVISION POINT OF EVERY POSSIBLE OUTCOME.
WAVES, AND WILL. CONSCIOUS-NESS OF REALITY
THE FUTURE BECOMES THE PAST, AND THE PAST, THE PRESENT...

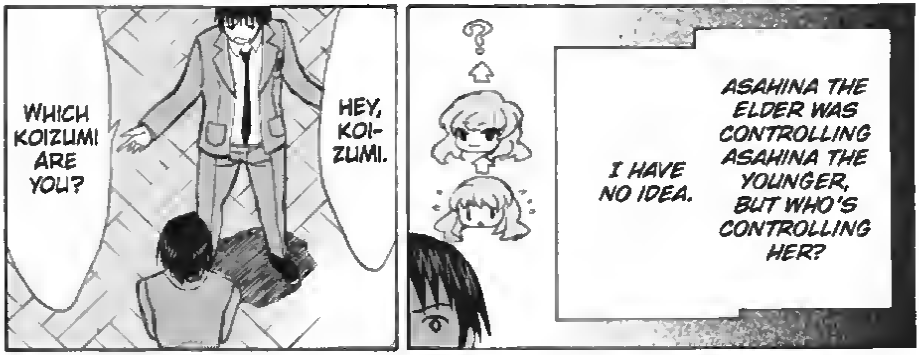
IT REMINDS ME OF THE DATA JURISDICTION SPACE THAT ASAKURA CREATED.
GEOMETRIC PATTERNS FLICKER HERE AND THERE IN MY FIELD OF VISION.
KUYOH SUOH! WHEN DID SHE...?
DID YOU BETRAY ME!?
KUYOH.
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH THE WORLD?
...I SEE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT. SO IT'S ALREADY DIVERGED, HAS IT?
WHO IN THE HELL...
IT'S LIKE THERE'S ANOTHER WORLD...
SO WHAT IS THIS, THEN?
NO.
I HAVE COME HERE.
THAT IS THE ANSWER.

HELLO, THERE.
KOI-ZUMI?
INDEED, IT IS ITSUKI KOIZUMI, JUST AS YOU SAY.
THE ONE AND ONLY, IN THE FLESH. I WAS ACTUALLY HOPING TO MAKE A SLIGHTLY MORE DRAMATIC ENTRANCE, BUT THERE WASN'T TIME.
IT CAN'T BE...!
THIS IS SASAKI'S CLOSED SPACE!
YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO ENTER IT!

FEEL FREE TO LOOK OUT-SIDE.
UNFOR-TUNATELY ...
...AS FAR AS THIS SCHOOL IS CONCERNED, IT DOES NOT EXIST ONLY WITHIN THE WORLD YOU AND YOUR COMRADES CLOSED OFF.
THAT'S WHAT SHE WAS...!?
THAT GIRL FROM BEFORE ...
HA (GASP)
はっ
THAT CAN'T BE.
THIS ISN'T SUZU-MIYA'S ...!
FASA (FWSH)
ファサ
TODAY IS SEEING A LOT OF UNEX-PECTED GUESTS.
"ASTON-ISHMENT." THAT WAS THE ONLY WORD I CAN THINK OF.
HUH ...?
HELLO, KYON-KUN.
WHAT IS GOING ON ...?

WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE!?
ASA-HINA-SAN!?
BA (FWAP)
TEE HEE!
I GOT KOIZUMI-KUN TO BRING ME! ALTHOUGH I REALLY WANTED TO POP OUT FROM THE BROOM CLOSET!
KO (CLACK)
I'M HONORED TO FINALLY MEET YOU.
YOUR TRUE FORM, I MEAN.
YOU SEEM WELL, THE PAST NOTWITH-STANDING.
IT DOESN'T SEEM AS THOUGH YOU'RE OPERATING UNDER MANY RESTRICTIONS HERE, SO IF POSSIBLE I'D LIKE TO HAVE A NICE LONG CHAT.

AS FAR AS THIS OPERATION GOES, I'M JUST A SINGLE PIECE OF IT.
IT WAS SPECIAL, TOP-LEVEL CLASSIFIED SECRET.
FUU (WHEW)
THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY TRUE.
THIS IS THE FIRST I'VE HEARD OF THIS, MYSELF.


WHICH KOIZUMI ARE YOU?
HEY, KOIZUMI.
I HAVE NO IDEA.
ASAHINA THE ELDER WAS CONTROLLING ASAHINA THE YOUNGER, BUT WHO'S CONTROLLING HER?

α? WHAT KIND OF CODE IS THAT?
IF PRESSED, I SUPPOSE YOU COULD SAY I'M THE α VERSION.
I TOO WAS FUSED A MOMENT AGO.
I'M BOTH.

AH, PARDON ME. IT'S MERELY A CONVENIENT LABEL.
ONE IS FROM THE VERSION OF HISTORY WHERE WE WERE BUSY WITH THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS FOR NEW MEMBERS.
AND THE OTHER IS THE VERSION WHERE NAGATO FELL ILL, THROWING THE SOS BRIGADE INTO DYSFUNCTION.
YOU SEEM AS THOUGH YOUR EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY DISRUPTED.
AND SO THEY HAVE.
WE CAN'T HAVE YOU UNDERESTIMATING US.
UNDOUBTEDLY YOU'VE DONE YOUR HOMEWORK AND PREPARED YOUR COUNTERMEASURES.
BUT NONE OF YOU YET UNDERSTAND HARUHI SUZUMIYA.

NOR A BARELY-COMPETENT ALIEN.
NOT BY A HALF-BAKED TIME-TRAVELER, NOR A SHABBY ESPER.
SUZUMIYA, OUR AWE-INSPIRING BRIGADE CHIEF, WILL NOT BE OUTSMARTED.
SHE MAY NOT BE A GOD.
THIS MORNING, I FOUND THIS IN MY SHOE LOCKER.
WOULD YOU LIKE TO READ IT?
(SNATCH)
...THAT EVEN GODLIKE ABILITIES CANNOT ANALYZE HER.
...SHE'S SUCH AN IRREGULAR HUMAN...
BUT MAYBE, JUST MAYBE ...

SO YASUMI LEFT A LETTER FOR SOMEONE OTHER THAN ME.
BUT WHY YOU, KOIZUMI?
"PLEASE COME TO THE SCHOOL GATE AT SIX O'CLOCK THIS EVE-NING."
...WHEN YOU YOU HEADED HERE WITH SASAKI-SAN, KYOKO TACHIBANA, AND THAT TIME TRAVELER.
THE β VERSION OF MYSELF FOLLOWED AFTER YOU...
BUT I HADN'T FELT ANY PREMONITIONS OF ITS APPEARANCE, SO IT WAS RATHER SURPRISING.
GOOD OLD CLOSED SPACE.
THERE, THE TWO VERSIONS OF MYSELF SAW THE SAME THING.
MEANWHILE, THE α ME CAME TO THE SCHOOL GATE AS DIRECTED.
...I MET MY α SELF ALONE.
THEN JUST BEFORE I ENTERED CLOSED SPACE WITH HER...
THEN, ASAHINA-SAN HERE I CALLED OUT TO MY β SELF.

THAT'S YOUR WEAKNESS, KOIZUMI-KUN.
ALTHOUGH IT'S CERTAINLY TRUE THAT YOU WERE NECESSARY.
YOU KNOW THE REST.
THE MOMENT WE TOUCHED, WE BECAME ONE PERSON.
AND I UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING.
YOU MUST BE JOKING!
YOU'RE ...
... YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO GO THIS FAR IN INTERFERING WITH ME!?

ARE YOU REALLY TRYING TO SOLIDIFY THAT FUTURE, EVEN IF IT MEANS SPLITTING THE WORLD IN TWO?
EDITING AN ALREADY-FIXED TIME PLANE WILL NOT CHANGE OUR FUTURE.
NO—IT MUST NOT BE CHANGED.

TA (TMP)
IT WILL CHANGE.
NOT BECAUSE OF YOU.
OR ME, OR ANYONE HERE...
...IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR US.
HE'S TREMBLING... ARE THESE HIS TRUE FEELINGS?

BUT WITH THE POWER OF HARUHI SUZUMIYA, IT'S POSSIBLE.
IF I COULD USE HER POWER...
...I COULD REMAKE EVERYTHING ABOUT THE SPACE-TIME INFORMATION I'VE LIVED THROUGH.
I COULD COMPLETELY AND PERFECTLY REWRITE EVERYTHING ...
...FROM THIS POINT ON INTO THE FUTURE.
NOT BY INDIVIDUALLY ALTERING TIME PLANES LITTLE BY LITTLE, BUT BY CORRECTING EVERY PLANE ON INTO INFINITY!

I DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOU...
...MY SISTER!

HUH? WHAT'D HE SAY? SISTER?
AS IN, ASAHINA-SAN IS HIS...?

I... HAVE NO BROTHER.
AND LIKEWISE, THE ME WHO IS YOUR SISTER DOES NOT EXIST.
HISTORY THAT IS LOST... PEOPLE WHO ARE LOST...
...CAN NEVER RETURN.
THAT'S WHY I CAME HERE!
TO THIS TIME PLANE, WHERE PEOPLE WALLOW IN THE FOLLY OF THEIR LIVES!
I WILL GET YOU BACK.
THAT'S WHY I JOINED FORCES WITH THAT EXTRATER-RESTRIAL INTELLI-GENCE.
WHY ELSE WOULD I DEAL WITH SUCH A—!

PLEASE, FORGET ABOUT ME.
YOU MUSTN'T USE THE TPDD FOR SUCH THINGS.
WE DON'T BELONG HERE.
YOU MUST UNDER-STAND...
...HOW IMPORTANT HARUHI SUZUMIYA IS FOR THIS TIME PLANE.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR HER, OUR FUTURE WOULD BE...

I KNOW.
THAT'S WHY I BET ON A SECOND POSSIBILITY.
WHAT THE FUTURE NEEDS ISN'T HARUHI SUZUMIYA, BUT HER POWER.
IF IT COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO SOMEONE ELSE, OTHER POSSIBILITIES APPEAR.
AND MY ALLY, KYOKO TACHIBANA, FOUND THE PERFECT PERSON.
SHE CAN CONTROL IT MUCH MORE SKILLFULLY THAN HARUHI SUZUMIYA.
IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR US!

WE WOULDN'T BE TRAPPED BY FIXED EVENTS.
WE'D BE ABLE TO ERASE THEM...
...AND CHOOSE OUR OWN FUTURE!
WE'D BE ABLE TO ACCESS INFINITE POSSI-BILITY!
BA (WHAT?)

I WANT TO CHOOSE A FUTURE WITH YOU IN IT!
THAT'S WHAT I WANT, MY SISTER!

TO BE CONTINUED

The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya

19

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